

## **Rabies in Idaho**

In Idaho, only bats are known to be natural reservoirs for rabies. However, bats are not the only animal of interest when it comes to rabies. All mammals may become infected with rabies and ALL mammals should be considered potentially rabid when they bite, scratch or otherwise expose people or pets to their saliva. Other exposures that could also be considered high risk may include contacting nervous tissue (brain or spinal cord) from a potentially rabid animal or waking in a room with a bat, without having a clear idea of the bat's behavior during the night.

Between 1999 and 2007 an average of 17 bats (range of 5 – 38) per year, or 10.6% of bat submissions (range: 4.8% to 19.8%), tested positive for rabies by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Bureau of Laboratories (see Table). This data includes only animals that actually were submitted for testing to the Idaho Bureau of Laboratories; the actual number of rabid bats (and other species) in Idaho is likely much higher. Rabid bats have been reported from almost all parts of Idaho and have been detected from May to November. A handful of other species in Idaho have also been documented as having the bat strain of rabies (see Table). Because other mammals have tested positive for rabies, the risk of rabies exposures from bites, scratches, or other exposures from mammals other than bats must not be ignored as a possible source of rabies.

Rabies infection is virtually 100% fatal in people and animals, without timely medical intervention. If a person has been exposed to a rabid animal they should discuss the situation with a healthcare provider as soon as possible to determine if rabies post-exposure prophylaxis would be recommended. If a pet or other domestic animal is exposed to a potentially rabid animal (e.g., attacked by a wild animal, caught a bat, bitten by another domestic animal) the owner should discuss the animal's exposure with their veterinarian and decide what medical management or quarantine would be appropriate. Pet owners should always keep their pet's rabies vaccinations current. Even vaccinated animals should be referred to a veterinarian to make sure that they are being properly protected from this deadly virus.

## **The Epidemiology of Rabies in Idaho**

The table below lists rabid bats and other rabid animals detected in Idaho between 1999 and 2007. Rabid animals (primarily bats) have been recorded annually in Idaho since 1961, but are not included here before 1999. Additional rabies findings in animals other than bats are also included in the table for historical purposes.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Rabid bats</b>	<b>Other rabid animals</b>
2007	12	0
2006	26	0
2005	12	0
2004	7	1 skunk (District 5)
2003	15	0
2002	38	0
2001	28	1 bobcat (District 6)
2000	10	0
1999	5	1 horse (District 7)
<b>Historical Data</b>		
1992		1 cat (District 7)
1991		1 cat (District 7)
1968		1 raccoon imported from Florida (District 2)
1967		1 cat (District 1), 1 skunk (District 3)

The actual geographic distribution of rabies in Idaho may be more far-reaching than is known, due to a lack of human habitation and, therefore, a lack of animals being submitted for testing. In addition, some bats migrate annually and may introduce rabies into an area not previously reporting rabid animals. Because of this, no area can be deemed rabies-free in Idaho. The 2001-2007 maps shown below depict the geographic areas reporting one rabid bat per red dot, by the year reported.



